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ABSTRACT

Beginning students in guidance and counseling comprised the two research groups: (1) a sensitivity-participatory group with activities ranging from T-grouping to sensory awareness to creative exercises; and (2) a didactic group in which the main focus was on instructor presentation of material relating to groups. The author sought to determine: (1) if movement toward self-actualization (as measured by Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) would occur as a result of a participatory group experience; and (2) if there would be between-group differences on pre- and post-group POI mean scores. Results indicated that, for the participatory group, all scales were either highly significant or in the direction of greater self-actualization at the conclusion of the group experience. Only on the Self-Actualizing Value scale did significance reach the required level where a between-group comparison was concerned. The discussion suggests why this is so. (TL)

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Impact of a Participatory Group Experience On Counselors in Training

In recent years a great deal of attention has been given to the concept of self-actualization and the relevance of this concept for counselors and other educators. Impetus to researching self-actualization has been given by Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory, (Shostrom, 1961), a 150 item, paired response instrument. The POI yields measures for fourteen scales, four of which have been combined by Knapp (1965) to form two major scales. These two major scales and 10 minor scales have been discussed in detail by Shostrom (1963) and are summarized below.

Personal Orientation Inventory Scales (Shostrom, 1966, pg. 6)

Time Competence (Tc) - Measures degree to which one is present oriented.

Inner Directedness (I) - Independent, self-supportive. Measures whether reactivity is basically toward others or toward self.

Self-Actualizing Value (SAV) - Measures affirmation of a primary value of self-actualizing people.

Existentiality (Ex) - Measures ability to situationally or existentially react without rigid adherence to principles.

Feeling Reactivity (Fr) - Measures sensitivity of responsiveness to one's needs and feelings.

Spontaneity (S) - Measures freedom to react spontaneously or to be oneself.

Self-Regard (Sr) - Measures affirmation of self because of worth or strength.

Self-Acceptance (Sa) - Measures affirmation or acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses or deficiencies.

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Nature of Man (Nc) - Measures degree of the constructive view of the nature of man, masculinity, femininity.

Synergy (Sy) - Measures ability to be synergistic, to transcend dichotomies.

Acceptance of Aggression (A) - Measures ability to accept one's natural aggressiveness as opposed to defensiveness, denial and repression of aggression.

Capacity for Intimate Contact (C) - Measures ability to develop contactful intimate relationships with other human beings, unencumbered by expectations and obligations.

In group experiences it is the consensus of opinion that self-actualization and interpersonal growth are among the principal goals of the experience. Assuming the appropriateness of the POI as an instrument for measuring self-actualization this research sought to determine if changes in the direction of higher interpersonal and individualistic functioning (self-actualization) would occur in different degrees in a laboratory learning type group as compared to changes taking place in a more didactically oriented classroom. Evidence collected by Foulds (1967) indicates that the POI has discriminating power with respect to correlates of therapeutic effectiveness and he suggests that the inventory might have value in assessing personal progress of students in helping professions. Culbert, et al (1968) discuss the feasibility of using just the POI, without judges ratings, etc. to measure changes in individuals as a result of applying a certain stimulus and they conclude that it can be used as the sole instrument in measuring

change. These studies and other validity studies of the POI suggest that the methodology of this study is both appropriate and needed.

Such diverse writers as Maslow (1968), Rogers (1961, 1963), Ellis (1967), Ssasz (1960, 1961) and Sarbin (1967) suggest greater emphasis be given to normal groups in an attempt to develop a model which is appropriate for the person who is suffering distress; not because he is mentally ill, but because he is human. If there is going to be an increasing emphasis on the sensitivity-laboratory training model as a tool for making an inter-personal experience available to the normal person then research in behavioral changes as a consequence of group learning needs to be undertaken.

Method

In this study the POI was administered to all participants in both the participatory and didactic groups during the first meeting with them. The post group administration of the inventory came at the conclusion of formal scheduled activity for all participants. With the exception of one laboratory learning group which met for eight weeks the temporal dimension was two hours a week for the full sixteen weeks of an academic semester. All participants in this research were beginning Master's Degree students in Guidance and Counseling and were taking the course, Group Counseling I, as a requirement during their first term on campus.

The activities included as part of the participatory (laboratory group) consisted of all or most of the following: (1) a minimum of twelve hours devoted to unstructured T-group activity, (2) three 2 hour sessions devoted to sensory awareness, relaxation, physical movement type activities, (3) approximately four 2 hour sessions devoted to decision making activities and exercises appropriate to specific solutions of group problems. Examples would include, "Grievances in Black Communities", "Factories and Missiles", "NASA Exercise", "Selecting a Coal Corporation Manager", and various trust and team building exercises, (4) no more than four hours of input usually in 20-30 minute segments, (5) remainder of time allotted to working in dyads, triads, sextettes on such topics as: defining individual problems and possible solutions, listening and helping, creative exercises such as writing songs, constructing collages and performing pantomimes, (6) a course log for each session, and (7) viewing of Shostrom's "Actualization Group" films. For the didactic group the main focus was on instructor presentation of material relating to groups. Discussion was limited to questions directed at the instructor and no structure was provided for small group work or affective level group functioning. A specific textbook, Perspectives on the Group Process[1], was required for the didactic

[1]Kemp, C. G., Perspectives on the Group Process, Second Edition, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1970.

group. In the participatory group a list of possible books dealing with groups was passed out and members were free to choose one, none, or all of them. Evaluation in both participatory and didactic groups was on the basis of papers turned in to the instructor at the 4th, 8th, and 12th week of the course and on the log turned in at the conclusion of the semester.

Results

Group means and t tests of significance were calculated for each of the twelve scales of the POI. For the participatory group all mean differences, except for Self-Regard and Synergy, were significant at the .01 level. The mean difference for the Self-Regard scale was significant at the .05 level, the mean difference for the Synergy sub-scale was in the expected direction but was non-significant. All mean differences were in the direction of showing that there was evidence of increased self-actualization on the part of participants at the conclusion of a sensitivity type group experience.

POI pre and post test means were also analyzed (Table 1) for the didactic group. These results indicate that the mean difference on the Spontaneity scale was significant at the .01 level and differences on Time Competence, Self-Actualizing Value, and Existentiality were significant at the .05 level. Except for a lower post mean score for Self-Actualizing Value all means for the didactic group were in the direction of greater self-actualization.

Table 2 shows the results in mean differences on each of the twelve scales between the participatory and didactic groups. The prediction was that greater mean differences in the direction of increased self-actualization would be evident for the participatory group. Only on the SAV scale did the participatory group mean reach a level significantly different from the didactic group. Differences approached the required level of significance for the Inner Directedness and Feeling Reactivity scales. Arithmetic mean differences favoring the didactic group were evident only on Time Competence, Self-Regard and Synergy. None of these differences approached the required level.

Discussion

The question can be raised as to whether an instrument such as the POI has any value in selecting personnel for a program such as counselor education or measuring changes which occur in people as a result of applying certain stimuli. Research previously cited, Foulds (1967), Culbert, Clark and Bobele (1968), Shostrom and Knapp (1964) has indicated that the POI can be used to show changes which occur in therapy and sensitivity groups. In this research differences between pre and post POI means for the participatory group were highly significant for all of the scales except Self-Regard and Synergy and both of these were in the direction of greater self-actualization at the conclusion of the group experience. The data reported in

TABLE I

Changes in Personal Orientation Inventory Scores for counselors in training: Participatory Group and Didactic approaches.

POI scale	Participatory Group				Didactic Instruction			
	Pre Group Means	Post Group Means	t Values	Sig. Level	Pre Group Means	Post Group Means	t Values	Sig. Level
Time Competence	17.576	18.739	5.117	.01	17.500	19.000	2.086	.05
Inner Directedness	84.913	94.641	9.130	.01	87.286	92.143	1.864	N.S.
Self-Actualizing Value	19.804	21.467	5.807	.01	21.500	20.429	2.234	.05
Existentiality	21.554	23.630	3.235	.01	21.500	23.857	2.233	.05
Feeling Reactivity	15.478	17.576	7.056	.01	17.071	17.143	.123	N.S.
Spontaneity	11.946	14.120	8.251	.01	12.429	14.286	2.894	.01
Self-Regard	12.587	13.076	2.213	.05	12.786	13.429	1.387	N.S.
Self-Acceptance	16.283	18.348	6.007	.01	16.357	17.786	1.638	N.S.
Nature of Man	12.207	12.902	3.584	.01	12.357	12.714	1.383	N.S.
Synergy	7.522	7.652	.728	N.S.	7.429	7.571	.596	N.S.
Acceptance of Aggression	16.196	17.848	5.152	.01	17.571	17.786	.367	N.S.
Capacity for Intimate Contact	18.293	20.304	5.633	.01	18.857	19.857	1.130	N.S.

this paper indicates that group participants do change their responses significantly on the POI at the end of a sensitivity-participatory type group.

Previous research using pre and post group data, Guinan and Foulds (1970), found significant changes on the following POI scales: I, Ex, Fr, S, Sa, A, and C. Except for Self-Actualizing Value (SAV) replacing Existentiality (Ex) these were the scales with the highest t values for the participatory group in this study. This would give some credence to a conclusion that one can predict the kinds of change to look for in a sensitivity group and also might offer a possible way of evaluating the effectiveness of a group experience.

For the participatory group Self-Regard and Synergy were the only scales which did not show significant mean differences for the two administrations of the POI and both of these were in the direction of greater self-actualization for the participants following the group experience. Previous studies, Guinan and Foulds (1970), Shostrom and Knapp (1964), Culbert, et al (1968) have not found Synergy to be one of the important scales in terms of change. This researcher feels that the small number of items included on the Synergy scale make it the most unreliable sub-scale of the POI. The other non-significant scale for the participatory group was Self-Regard (Sr). This

scale has also not been a scale showing significant change on the similar studies cited. It is the conjecture of this writer that the nature of a laboratory type group, with an emphasis on both positive and negative attributes of individuals, causes individuals to feel uncertain about their appraisal of self.

For the didactic group the most significant change was on the spontaneity scale. This finding suggests that an individual's feelings toward being free to express himself in a group can be enhanced by merely talking about it. Perhaps this change reflects the emphasis which the instructor places on being free to express one's feelings on topics in which he has an interest. Other significant changes for the lecture oriented group were on Self-Actualizing Value (SAV), Time Competence (Tc), and Existentiality (Ex). The decrease in mean score on the SAV scale between the post and pre administration is difficult to explain. The only plausible explanation would be that the score changes for any of the scales in the didactic group would reflect differing degrees of emphasis on various topics in the classroom setting. Research should be undertaken where different kinds of cognitive input would be given to determine if particular emphasis on specific topics can create changes in the way individuals respond to such measures as the POI.

The second part of the research, Table 2, dealt with the comparison of pre and post POI means between the participatory

TABLE 2

Differences in Pre and Post Personal Orientation Inventory Means between Participatory and Didactic approaches to a course in Group Counseling.

	Participatory Pre-Post Mean Difference	Didactic Approach Pre-Post Mean Difference	F	Level of Significance
Time Competence	1.163	1.500	.371	N.S.
Inner Directedness	9.728	1.857	2.849	.09
Self-Actualizing Value	1.663	-1.071	13.223	.01
Existentiality	2.076	2.357	.078	N.S.
Feeling Reactivity	2.098	.172	3.142	.07
Spontaneity	2.174	1.857	.000	N.S.
Self-Regard	.489	.643	.626	N.S.
Self-Acceptance	2.065	1.429	.720	N.S.
Nature of Man	.695	.357	.705	N.S.
Synergy	.130	.142	.080	N.S.
Acceptance of Aggression	1.652	.215	1.415	N.S.
Capacity for Intimate Contact	2.011	1.000	.944	N.S.

group and the didactic group. Data from Table 2 shows that only on the Self-Actualizing Value (SAV) scale did significance reach the required level. The conclusion here would be that self-actualization is a concept which cannot be strictly verbalized, it must be lived in a type of setting characterized by a sensitivity type group. Differences favoring the participatory group approached significance for the Inner Directedness (I) and the Feeling Reactivity (Fr) scale. This would reflect a growing awareness of "where one was at" as a result of a group experience. The mean differences on Time Competence (Tc), Synergy (Sy), Self-Regard (Sr), and Existentiality (Ex) were in the direction of higher self-actualization for the didactic group. Findings reported in previous research has substantiated that changes in scores on these dimensions will be less than significant for therapy or sensitivity groups.

Research has indicated the POI score changes do take place during individual therapy and group experiences. Additional longitudinal research needs to be undertaken to determine if these changes are permanent and reflected in the behavior of the prospective counselor during his practicum and actual on the job experience. This is especially needed in light of earlier findings by this writer (1967) where clients responded with less positive feelings toward high self-actualizing counselors (measured by POI scores) than those with lower scores on the POI.

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